



National College for  
School Leadership

Inspiring leaders;  
improving children's lives

# ECM Premium Project

School leadership, Every Child Matters  
and school standards

Case Studies

SCHOOL LEADERS

Online Learning Resource

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# Introduction

The ECM Premium Project was a study to identify the evidence base for a link between the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda and improvements in school standards, and to identify the nature and quality of leadership that underpins it. This study was undertaken by staff and associates of Quality in Study Support (QiSS), Canterbury Christchurch University and Leadership for Learning, University of Cambridge. These case studies form part of a suite of resources resultant from the project which include a report, report summary and the 'Levers for Leaders and Learning' Toolkit, a toolkit designed to promote leadership in extended schools.

# Bournville Junior School

## Portrait

The three-form entry junior school is located just four miles from the centre of Birmingham and a pleasant walk from Bournville railway station. The roads are tree lined, and wafts of chocolate – emanating from Cadbury’s ‘factory in a garden’ – greet visitors passing the work’s playing fields. The nearby houses are semi-detached, each pair designed differently from the others. This is a conservation area, preserving the original feel of the early 20th century village built by the Cadbury family to house their workers in good conditions. The area is peaceful and well ordered.

Continuing up the hill, the junior school rises above its sister infant school, and with its 15-bell tower topping the Edwardian Gothic building, the school might easily be mistaken for a church. A grassy strip with trees separates the school from the two roads that it adjoins. The two schools’ playgrounds are mainly hidden from the roads by the listed buildings, which are brick-built, the junior school having wide gothic-arched wooden doors, and a high roof. Within, many classrooms are located around a central hall that has a high timbered ceiling and panels, some 10 feet above the floor, which depict scenes from the bible, a reminder of the Quaker origins of the school and village. While the buildings, subject to conservation laws, remain largely as they were built in 1906, the classrooms have nonetheless been refurbished for the modern curriculum, containing interactive whiteboards, and brightly coloured noticeboards. The atmosphere is calm yet buzzing; the children are happy and engaged with their lessons.

## Maintaining standards with a changing cohort

The junior school is a co-educational, non-denominational voluntary-aided school, and has approximately 380 pupils. Since 2005 it has won the local authority Learning Achievement Award for ‘learning through collaboration’, its second National Healthy Schools Award, its third Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Sportsmark Award. The Border Busters extended schools cluster of which it is a part has gained the Quality in Extended Schools Award. The school was awarded Beacon status in 2001, focused on citizenship, modern foreign languages, initial teacher training and supporting schools facing challenging circumstances.

The socio-economic profile is broadly average, with children coming from professional, academic, working, unemployed and single-parent low-income families. Nearly a quarter of students now come from minority ethnic groups, and four per cent speak another language at home. About 13 per cent on roll are acknowledged as having special educational needs (SEN), with a further five per cent receiving assistance; approximately four per cent are statemented/require substantial support. Nearly 15 per cent of pupils have been identified as gifted or talented.

Most of the pupils live locally. The Bournville Trust, who administer many of the houses in this conservation area, has recently become a housing association, and as such is committed to taking 50 per cent of pupils from the city housing list each year. The profile of the school is changing, with an increasing number of children coming from disadvantaged or unsupported single families. The number of pupils from minority backgrounds has doubled in four years, and eligibility to free school meals has risen to 15 per cent. There has been a rise in marital break-ups and of parents

whose full-time employment prevents them from being able to offer significant time to their children.

Education is seen as important by the majority of parents, reflected in a 95 per cent attendance at consultation meetings and information sessions. Children enter Key Stage 2 'better than normally expected of pupils of that age'.

## What steers the school: vision, values and professional competences

### Supporting high standards

George Cadbury founded the school to provide a 'fine' education. While the school's main aim is to 'provide the best educational environment possible to enable each child to develop and learn towards their full potential', the vision is 'to have a vibrant and exciting learning environment, where everyone feels valued, cared for and supported' (SEF 2007). Making learning fun is important, as is ensuring that pupils respect each other's values and cultures, and members of staff have high expectations of behaviour as well as social and academic progress. The headteacher believes that the 'best educational environment' is one in which all members, including staff, enjoy their work.

Strategies to achieve the overall aim include:

- involving pupils meaningfully in the running of the school;
- giving access to a wide range of study support activities;
- childcare arrangements;
- working closely with parents, as partners in the learning process, to raise standards;
- working closely with other schools and education institutions to share expertise;
- links to national bodies.

The school council, as it is run in this school, is a particularly powerful vehicle for pupils to experience democracy-in-action, emphasising their rights and responsibilities.

## Extended services on offer

### Study support activities

Study support activities occur each weekday evening, and during the lunch hour. There is a large range, with three clubs enriching experience in traditional curriculum areas (French, science and Spanish); six sports-related (football, netball, Irish dancing, dance, cycling and skipping); six music-related (choir, brass, rock band, orchestra, handbells and recorder); and two special interests (gardening and chess). Several occur more than once a week, and some are targeted towards particular Year groups. Most are run voluntarily by teachers, a teaching assistant and a past pupil, but some are provided by outside agencies. Pupils have also taken part in a survey of activities they would like to undertake in the future, which highlighted an interest in self-defence and drama, and a wish for a homework club. The latter is being set up for autumn 2008.

In addition there is peripatetic teaching of instruments during the day, involving over 100 pupils. Music lessons include: violin, viola, cello, oboe, flute, clarinet, percussion, guitar, brass and keyboard. The school also offers enrichment activities such as visiting plays, ballet and the opera. Parents fund the school trips, but there is a greatly extended payment plan (over nearly a year). The school has occasionally funded a pupil in extreme financial poverty.

A range of sporting activities at lunchtime and after school is perceived as 'having a positive impact on children's attitudes and behaviour' (SEF 2007), as well as enriching pupils' interests and experience. Specialist coaches

are brought in to support some sports, such as Warwickshire County Cricket Club running sessions.

To meet the childcare needs of working parents a breakfast club is open every morning from 7am. After-school childcare is provided by a local community-based organisation but school-based after-school care is planned for September 2008.

## Border Busters cluster

The school is also part of the Border Busters extended service cluster of Birmingham Local Authority. Clusters are the main means of implementing the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda in Birmingham, and there is strong and effective support from the local authority to create the necessary collaborative working between education, health and social care agencies. This includes staffing, support needs identification and planning, staff development and quality assurance.

The cluster consists of a partnership between the local authority, individual schools, statutory agencies and voluntary organisations, that together form a strong multi-agency team. The 13 junior, infant and primary schools, and one secondary have a range of different wants and challenges; for example, some serve mainly deprived areas, some mainly Roman Catholic.

The cluster schools work closely with each other and the cluster coordinator, under the aegis of a steering committee, and collectively employ people for specific tasks. The steering committee consists of over 50 representatives from all the partners, six of whom are regular attendees of meetings. The steering committee chair holds post for two terms. The coordinator is seen as a dedicated, dynamic and energetic individual, whose official role in the past has been to commission and monitor services, although members of this cluster perceive their coordinator, with appreciation, as someone

who also brokers, negotiates and organises further services.

The cluster has employed a family support worker, a nutritionist, and four parent support workers, the first having funding 'matched' by a Roman Catholic voluntary organisation, which enabled the position to be extended for a second year. The steering group also bid for £10,000 to identify and enable the most vulnerable children to access additional support, services and activities. The cluster has also funded training, such as that offered to foundation teachers to attend the Speech and Language Training programme, and to schools and partner agencies to use the Common Assessment Framework that supports 'swift and easy' referrals to support services.

Schools within the cluster have worked individually to develop their own extended services and supplemented this by taking advantage of the Border Buster network, with its collective brokerage, larger purchasing power and well-managed organisation of support services, under their able coordinator. School leaders believe that health, education and social services now work more closely on issues such as child protection. Partners are quick to offer resources, such as the Education Psychology Service supporting the delivery of parenting workshops, working and training alongside the cluster's family support worker and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) worker. The cluster has systematically identified where provision is lacking, and addressed this such as through encouraging particular activities or breakfast clubs. Providers of specific activities are sourced through the Education Service's study support section or tutors employed by the further education colleges or adult education centres run by the city council. While there are clear advantages to members of the cluster, there is also concern from some of the schools in more deprived areas that their specific difficulties could be masked by the overall profile of the cluster.

## Impact on standards

### Learning

Despite the changes to pupil intake, there has been no detrimental change to attainment at Key Stage 2; standards remain higher than expected both nationally and, to a greater extent, within the local authority. Typically over 80 per cent of pupils attain level 4 or above, with a substantial proportion achieving level 5. Most noticeably, in science in 2007, 55 per cent of the cohort achieved level 5. The school's contextual value added (CVA) for 2007 for Key Stages 1–2 was 99.8.

The absence rate is approximately four per cent, with little or no unauthorised absence, suggesting that pupils are well motivated to attend school.

### What supports learning?

The staff are well-qualified and stable; the headteacher has been in post for 12 years, and her recently promoted deputy for 17 years. There are three advanced skills teachers (ASTs) (modern foreign languages, science and art). There are also two trained learning mentors, one of whom is also an assistant child protection officer, as well as teaching assistants and ancillary staff.

### Developing new roles

The three learning mentors have the task of supporting the pupils as learners. Pupils trust them: issues discussed are confidential, and complement other ways in which children can express worries. The main learning mentor interviews all new students on entry and monitors how they are getting on in the initial stages, and interviews statemented children termly. As well as being available to children at lunchtime, before and after school, she is also available to talk to parents, should they wish. Complementing their counselling and anger management work with specific pupils the learning mentors also lead the structured play activities.

### Using external expertise

Links with four secondary specialist schools have provided assistance, enriching the curriculum in particular areas. The head of maths of one school works with the most able Year 6 mathematicians; a senior teacher of another works with Year 6 to develop their scientific knowledge; a history teacher of a third has worked (2005/06) with teachers at Bournville to enrich the history curriculum; and a department in a fourth is advising the school's modern foreign languages AST, and training two further members to develop teaching expertise in French.

### Pupil ownership

Central to the success of this school is the way in which pupils have ownership of their learning. This is encouraged through leadership opportunities, encouraging feedback and participating in communal activities.

Leadership opportunities include being a house team captain, belonging to the behaviour committee, and being part of the school council. The council and circle time were initially developed in response to concerns expressed by parents about the difficulties children had transferring from infant to junior school. Each class elects two representatives, who gather the views, concerns and suggestions of their classmates through activities such as circle time, and in turn feed back council activity to the class. They recently brought attention to pupils eating toast in the toilets, and arranged for the chair to talk in assembly about health hazards.

Pupils' views are also garnered through questionnaires, such as for the school travel plan (which encourages the walking bus), a 'worry box' and talking to the independent school adviser, which recently prompted a review on the use and communication of targets. Teachers see the school council as particularly good for pupils as it raises self-esteem, and allows pupils to engage with and

understand processes such as planning and conservation. Hence there is a concern that, as yet, there is no comparable democratic activity in the secondary schools to which pupils transfer.

The school council have worked with the school cook to develop healthy options at lunchtime, and as part of the development of the school travel plan, which encourages walking and cycling to school. Water is made available throughout the day, and parents have had a 'healthy lunchbox' workshop.

A house system that strengthens the vertical relationships between different Years is popular with pupils; they were keen to show off the bear (displayed in the hall) that bore the colours of the house that had won the most points during the week.

## Leadership

### Individual and collective efficacy

Staff development is an important factor in the way Bournville Junior School is accommodating to the changed remit of becoming an extended school. Training of teaching assistants to become learning mentors with new functions makes real the school's concern with the needs of the whole child.

Bournville is a school that thinks about its work collectively. The school council, as well as meeting fortnightly at lunchtime, has an 'away day' similar to the senior leadership's away day, where discussions about the future of the school occur and guest speakers are invited. The school council, together with the deputy head, have spoken at regional and national-level conferences about their work.

Within the school community pupils have real opportunities to influence decisions on the way the school is run. For example, the council produced the anti-bullying policy, and were

recently involved with interviewing for a new deputy headteacher. Curriculum issues are to be added to the school council's remit in the near future. They have also lobbied to improve facilities, such as the provision of toys and bike sheds. The latter involved them working with governors, planning and conservation officers to achieve an acceptable outcome. On another occasion they identified a problem with lunchtime supervisors not always attending to pupils, and invited the senior supervisor to a meeting to express these concerns.

Workshops for the whole staff are used to develop responses to changed circumstances and to increase the understanding and commitment of the staff team. The school have also held workshops on safe use of the internet and the behaviour policy was developed in conjunction with pupils. Membership of the South Birmingham Primary Strategy Learning Network has stimulated staff to question their teaching and learning skills, and enhanced professional development through an opportunity to share ideas, research and resources through working together on issues such as thinking skills.

## Internal development and navigating the external world

### Role of networks

Membership of a large number of networks enables the school to 'add a new dimension to the curriculum'. Some of these are formal networks, such as the Border Busters extended services cluster and South Birmingham Primary Strategy Learning Network, whereas others relate to members of staff seizing opportunities to work with other institutions and influence policy. All these enhance the capacity of the school; together staff are more knowledgeable about possibilities, and able to use this to enhance their children's experiences both beyond and within the curriculum.



Various members of staff are on national advisory panels. The headteacher is a member of the UNESCO Education Committee. In addition she is a governor of the local teacher training institution, with whom the school is a level three (highest level) partner.

The school also encourages local connections – a governor is a member of the Bournville Trust. Previous pupils were encouraged to join in the centenary celebrations, and one also runs one of the after-school clubs. In addition the school visited an old people's home, some residents of which had expressed anxiety about children's behaviour in society as a result of media press. Several had themselves attended the school as children and were pleasantly surprised about the children's behaviour and attitudes.

Pupils are involved in various activities in the local community, such as the choir and dancers visiting local community groups. Members of the school have worked with other network schools on projects such as walking, and are also involved in the student parliament in Birmingham.

## Parental partnership

Relationships with parents are good but the school is constantly developing new ways of increasing parental engagement with the school and of enabling parents to better support their children's learning. The Year 6 pupils and staff run an annual SATs workshop for parents. There are three parent-teacher consultations in the year, and parents' evenings alternate between 'early' and 'late' starts, in order to accommodate different parental work patterns. More recently the school has introduced the parent-child interview during the day. Most parents came. The school continues to look for ways to encourage hard-to-reach parents to attend, and as part of this they are trialling having a

crèche facility during consultations, which will add to the current arrangement of accommodating older children with a film.

The fortnightly newsletter asks for feedback on specific issues, as well as feeding back results of surveys, and informing parents of events and successes within the school. Parents also have the opportunity to complete more formal surveys, such as the recent one concerning the transfer of pupils between schools, and these are used to inform future practice. Parent governors are active in representing parents' views, and the school is planning a parent 'focus group' as a first step to creating a parent council.

## Conclusions

In this school, with its able cohort of pupils, the school has fostered children's self-esteem and pride in their work through a range of extensions to the curriculum. Study support activities have provided a stimulus for new interests and enjoyment, as well as an introduction to 'high culture', while the school council system has encouraged responsibility and social development. Leadership over a range of issues has been effectively distributed to pupils, and the ECM agenda forwarded through such activities. In addition, enthusiastic well-qualified staff make good use of opportunities, through their various links, to develop their skills and knowledge of recent innovation. Together, these appear to enhance both pupil and teacher commitment to all areas of the curriculum, which supports continued high attainment.

# The Canterbury Campus

## Portrait

On cresting the hill as you drive into Canterbury the tower of the cathedral appears above the roofs of the medieval city and its surrounding suburbs. The road becomes a wide boulevard, with flower beds leading down to the city walls. It is a pleasant, re-assuring prospect of a fine English city.

Canterbury Campus stands to your right on the edge of playing fields; the railway lines form a barrier between the city and the school and surrounding estate of local authority and privately rented housing that is almost invisible as you drive in. At times large numbers of children can be seen trying to cross the boulevard, while buses, vans and cars attempt to utilise the narrow road that is the principal access to the estate. The estate of more than a thousand houses has no post office, doctor's surgery or pharmacy and only a couple of corner shops.

The Canterbury Campus is an unusual federal organisation consisting of:

- Canterbury High School, a specialist sports college with foundation status
- Beauherne Primary School
- City View Nursery and Pre-school
- Canterbury adult education centre
- The Body and Mind Gym (funded by a private finance initiative [PFI], with schools having priority use from 8.30am to 5.30pm)
- The Appetti tennis centre
- Five elite academies for 16- to 18-year-olds organised with the governing bodies of athletics, tennis, rugby, volleyball and women's football, whose pupils are on the roll of Canterbury High School sixth form.

Also on site are the authority's behaviour support service and staff of the hospital school service.

The Campus' buildings range from the modern and well-designed, with specialist facilities for sports and adult education, to those urgently due for demolition and replacement, particularly the primary school buildings. The primary school and high school were built in the 1950s; their grounds abutted each other but entrances were on different roads. Yet again, initial impressions as you look across The Campus to Canterbury are of a well-endowed school in a handsome flourishing cathedral city.

However, Kent is an authority that maintains selection at age 11. The city of Canterbury has three independent schools, three grammar schools, two church schools, a technology college, a newly opened academy and finally, Canterbury High School. In the eyes of The Campus staff the high school's intake is the residue after four levels of academic, social and self-selection; the intake in the words of The Campus principal *"has been failed by the system or worse sees themselves as a failure"*.

Over 95 per cent of the pupils are white British working class; refugees, asylum seekers and children of students attending university in the city make up the small proportion of students from other ethnic groups. The level of social need among the student population of both the primary and secondary schools is very high.

The primary school and the high school are at different stages of development. In 1992 the high school was named one of the 20 worst schools in the country. But by 2005, when the 'hard' federation was established, Her Majesty Inspectorate's (HMI's) annual report identified the high school as outstanding and one of the most improved schools in the country. The primary school's difficulties are more recent; serious weaknesses were identified in 1997–98 and special measures ensued from 1998–2002.

The sports facilities, incorporating The Mind and Body Gym, opened in 2002 and the adult education centre was re-located on to The Campus in 2006.

The Campus is led by a principal (formerly the headteacher of the high school) and there is one governing body for the federated schools and the other constituents of The Campus.

### Canterbury High School

There are 1,171 pupils on roll, 231 of which are in the sixth form, including 75 students who are members of one of the five elite academies.

Half the pupils are on School Action or School Action Plus, with seven per cent having been statemented. A total of 25 per cent of students have active social services case files.

### Beauherne Primary School

There are 148 pupils on roll. A total of 48 per cent of pupils are on the special educational needs (SEN) register for School Action or School Action Plus, and 33 per cent are registered for free school meals.

Because of its reputation for effectively supporting SEN pupils and those with behavioural problems in particular, Beauherne has a very high level of pupil mobility. In 2007–08, and excluding the intake into the reception class, 25 per cent of the pupils on roll had joined in the past year. After years of decline its roll is now rising.

Attainment on entry to the primary and to the high school is very low.

## What steers the school: vision, values and professional competences

### History

It is against this background that the leadership team of Canterbury High School has built a federation of schools and other agencies with these purposes:

It is the responsibility of the school to educate children and to make Canterbury a better place to work, live and play and to improve the conditions on the estate where the school is situated; therefore recruitment is preferentially directed to people who live on the local estate.

‘Those with the least deserve the best’ is a watchword of Keith Hargrave, the principal of The Campus and formerly headteacher of the federated schools, whose visions and drive have steered The Campus over the past 21 years. The principal’s vision and many of the strategies and structures that he has put in place predate *Every Child Matters* (ECM):

*“ECM is helpful because it means I’m no longer a maverick. The mainstream has caught up with us”.*

The purposes of The Campus derive from theories about development and learning, of both children and adults, such as *“We can’t improve exam results without addressing social issues”*, and from judgements about needs such as *“Our pupils have a lack of self-confidence which leads them to act with exaggerated bravado”*.

The current leadership team strongly and openly works to the same values as all staff: *“The student is at the heart of everything”*, in the words of one of the deputy heads. Talking to the deputy and assistant headteachers and to the senior youth worker, we found they gave a consistent message about the core values and purposes of the school and where their jobs fitted in.

There is a shared sense of *taking suitable risks for the good of the students/children*. Using PFI finance to build the sports facilities and developing the partnership with the commercial sports organisations that share the facilities entailed accepting a certain level of financial risk for the schools. Recent examples include the decision to take on the running of the adult education centre as part of the federation and to solve the resulting culture clashes. Overall the approach can be

characterised as *strategic opportunism*.

The headteacher believes they have now convinced pupils that:

- they have the right to be well educated;
- they do not have the right to steal someone else's learning (that is, by being disruptive), and this point was confirmed in conversation with a girl on report for disruptive behaviour in class who used that very phrase.

## Extended services on offer

The notion of the core offer of extended services has not been the driver for the development of the wide range of services provided on The Campus. Rather, the services have been built up over time in response to need and to funding and development opportunities:

- *Study support* for both primary and secondary pupils (for example, breakfast clubs, use of the Playing for Success study centre at Kent County Cricket Club and extensive holiday provision).
- *Parenting support programmes*, including targeted sessions for children on the SEN register and those with case work support from social services and parent and toddler provision supported by a health visitor.
- *After-school childcare* but deliberately limited only to children whose parents are working.
- *Community access* to sports provision, a designated community room and to school facilities on a community and commercial lettings basis.
- *Adult education classes* are run from a centre that serves the whole of Canterbury and district. Both high school pupils and staff are able to study for A-levels at the centre.
- *Nursery provision*, with priority given to school-age mothers.

- *In-school support* for children with the school counsellor, inclusion manager and youth workers.
- *Effective referral* to external support services for pupils and an extensive range of longstanding relationships with child and family support agencies, both statutory and voluntary.
- A *police officer* with responsibility for diversion from the youth justice system has a base at The Campus and conducts regular clinics and teaches on the citizenship curriculum.

The school leadership team does not simply regard these services as aspects of the core offer but rather as necessary functions to achieve the core purposes of the school.

## Impact on standards

### Learning

In 2007 Canterbury High School's contextual value added (CVA) for Key Stages 2–4 was 1063.0 and for Key Stages 3–4 1059.4. The percentage of students achieving the equivalent of 5A\*–C GCSE passes was 72 per cent, rising every year from 39 per cent in 2004. The percentage achieving the equivalent of 5 A\*–C passes with English and maths included was 27 per cent.

Beauherne Primary School's Key Stages 1–2 CVA was 99.4. Aggregate test percentages for level 4 and above at Key Stage 2 have risen from 152 in 2004, after a dip in 2005, to 189 in 2007.

In both schools there is a longstanding problem of poor attendance by a small proportion of pupils, giving overall absence rates of seven per cent for Beauherne and 9.1 per cent for Canterbury High School.

Participation rates in out-of-school programmes, because children and young people choose to attend voluntarily, can also provide effective success indicators.

At Beauherne they are very successful in encouraging pupils to participate in out-of-school learning: 66 per cent attend at least one club, 47 per cent of whom are on the SEN register.

On a longer-term scale high school pupils are tracked for up to five years after leaving so that their achievements can be monitored and celebrated.

## What supports learning?

Measures of attainment alone do not take account of the breadth of the goals of The Campus and the two schools which make up its core. Because these schools are thoroughly extended, preventive interventions are a critical part of their activity. For example, a child at a Canterbury High School open day was overheard by a member of support staff saying to his parent *“I am looking forward to coming to CHS because I can trash the place”*. A deputy head then identified the child, contacted the primary school and discovered a long history of behavioural and family problems. He was able to arrange social services family support while the child was still at primary school and a place on summer school before he came to the high school. No trashing took place.

These types of successes can only be identified through case histories, or through long-term large-scale analyses of trends in social care referrals or crime statistics. It is therefore not surprising that the focus in these schools was on data by which the schools are currently judged and on monitoring the specific impact of programmes. So programmes for reducing lateness and smoking among pupils were being monitored and quantifiable data collected at the time of the research visits.

## Culture and routines that support learning

The restructuring of the school day and the range of activities available to pupils, and to others before, during and after formal school periods, have contributed very significantly to a culture of learning and purposeful activity.

Pupils and students at Beauherne Primary School and Canterbury High School were very clear about the aims of the school and were able to repeat the main principles – based on maximising learning. They were also very clear about what constituted unacceptable behaviour and had a clear knowledge of the escalating stages of sanctions and rewards. Staff and pupils share the value that interfering with another's learning is a serious offence. We interviewed one Year 10 student who told us she was on special report to help her learn *“not to interfere with others' learning”*.

The high school day has been reorganised into five periods of one hour, with a late lunch break and only one period in the afternoon. Bells to signal the end of periods have been abolished so there is no mass influx into corridors.

## Rewards

‘Bikes for Beauherne’ is a raffle for which tickets are earned through children reading at home three times a week. It is interesting as it appears to be working with a ‘currency’ that is understood and appreciated by children and parents alike in this locality. Bikes are awarded to the children and £50 ASDA vouchers to the parents. In Beauherne Primary School the use of ‘golden assemblies’ to celebrate achievement every week is planned so that parent/carers can attend. The parents of nearly all the members of the school council had attended a golden assembly. This is much appreciated by the pupils.

In Canterbury High School at Key Stage 4 there is a sophisticated reward system. Pupils can earn credits for 'performance' and 'fair play'. Credits are paper vouchers issued by the teachers with different colours for each faculty. These are 'bankable' and can be cashed for prizes such as vouchers to buy DVDs. Each student's account is openly viewable online. Students can therefore compare their position with that of their classmates but the head of 14–19 can analyse which pupils are receiving credits for what reasons, and which faculties are rewarding behaviour anomalously.

## Leadership

### Individual and collective efficacy

#### Staff development

Staff development has a high priority in both schools. Induction of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and the support of trainees on the graduate teacher programme (GTP) are said by the leadership team to be of a very high standard. Lesson observation is routine practice for all staff and is conducted by the assistant head responsible for staff development supported by a large number of the leadership team.

There is a deliberate policy of local recruitment to support functions, and to a lesser extent, to support teaching roles. Recruitment of staff via the GTP is also routine practice.

#### Distributing leadership

A vital component of the leadership approach in these schools is the creation of functioning teams that accept collective and individual responsibility to plan, monitor and change work practices for which they are responsible.

Leadership is distributed but the headteacher prefers the term 'contributive' leadership. What makes it possible for a large number of people to be contributive is:

- a coherent vision strongly held by the senior leadership team and focused on meeting the needs of learners;
- continually and consistently promulgating this vision;
- the building of a climate of trust, praise and mutual support;
- staff recruitment and development practices that support the vision.

#### Habits of leadership

A good school is a school that learns with a smile on its face.

The personal leadership style of the headteacher is:

- *"Always be cheerful."*
- *"Catch them in – don't catch them out."*

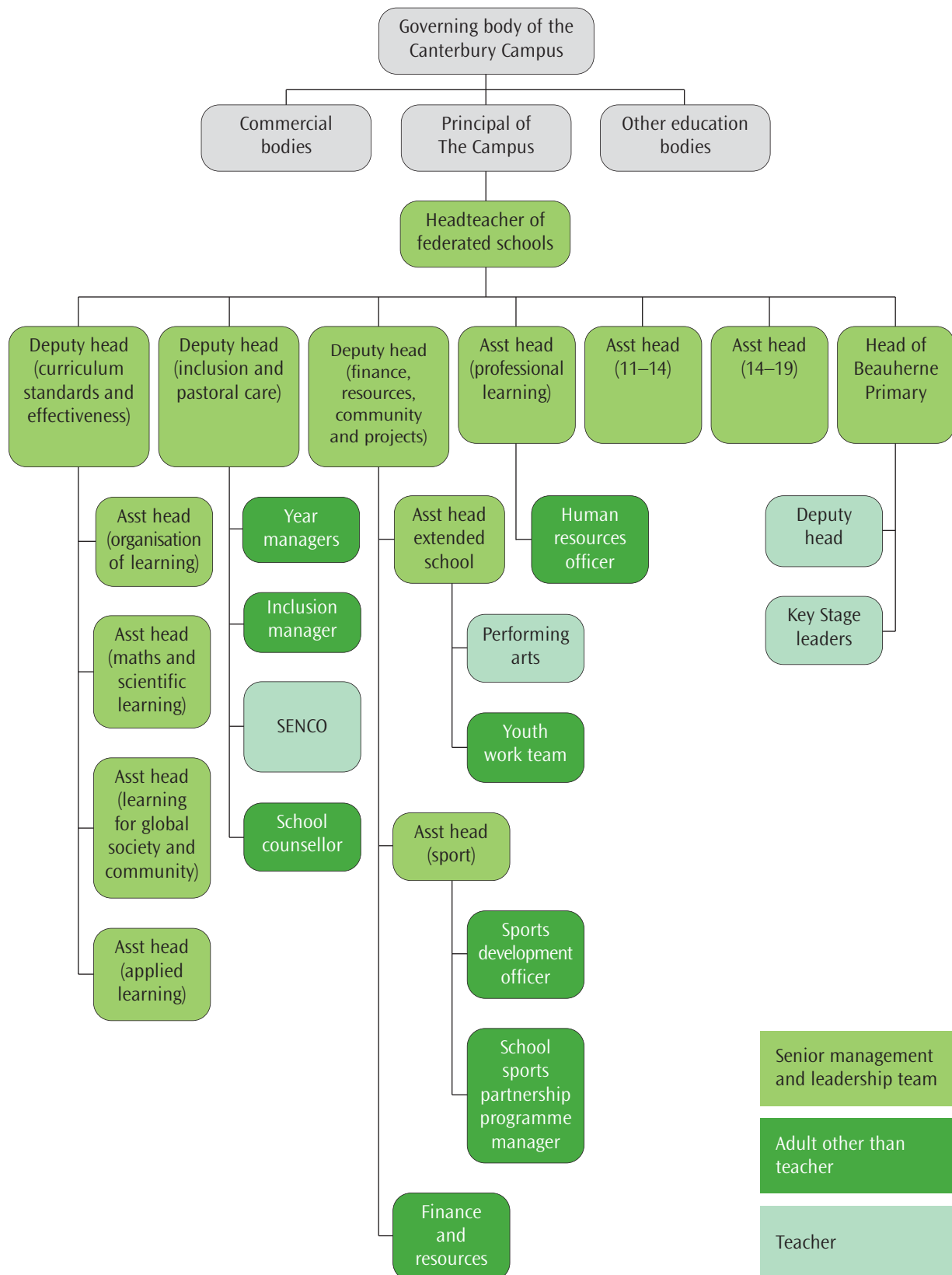
The senior leadership team is longstanding and has been remarkably stable. A number of the leadership team went with the principal when he was seconded to be executive head of Ramsgate School.

Management appears very open and includes daily briefings, weekly meetings and weekends away, resulting in clarity of shared vision and values and understanding of each other's roles. The headteacher's door is, literally, always open. Responsibility for *"walking about the school"* is allocated daily among the leadership team.

The school is effective in recognising and valuing the contribution of other professionals such as the two full-time and two part-time youth workers and the school councillor who are on the staff of the school, but also the police officer who is attached to the school and the adult education and professional sports instructors who are part of The Campus staff.



## Internal development and navigating the external world



The federated schools' senior leadership team consists of six people: the headteacher of the federation with the two senior staff of the primary school and the three deputy heads of the high school.

The three deputy heads of the high school are accountable to the headteacher of the federated schools and responsible for:

- site, finance, buildings, community and projects
- curriculum standards and effectiveness
- inclusion and pastoral care.

There are nine newly appointed assistant headteachers, with teaching loads, responsible for:

- faculties
- Key Stage managers
- professional development
- organisation of learning
- sport
- extended school.

Beauherne Primary School is led by a head of school supported by a deputy.

### **The remodelled workforce**

The workforce of the federated schools (excluding the other constituents of The Campus) is 164, of which 87 are not teachers. Workforce remodelling has therefore been used extensively to create specialist roles:

- a youth work team of two full-time and two part-time staff; delivering a strand of the Key Stage 4 curriculum and extensive study support provision, running onsite youth clubs and residential programmes in the holidays;
- year managers;
- performing arts development officer;
- programme manager for school sports

partnership for Canterbury;

- sports development officer;
- school counsellor;
- Connexions personal adviser;
- inclusion manager;
- human resources officer.

A police officer is also attached to the school.

In the high school one key innovation has been the appointment of non-teaching full-time Year managers to handle all the discipline, attendance, uniform issues and basic liaison with parents. There are no form groups and no registration periods. Instead, students are expected to be in class at 8.45am, ready to learn and registration takes place electronically each lesson. Year managers track attendance and chase up any internal truancy. They are given the autonomy and responsibility to follow up issues about pupils' behaviour and attendance with parents with support from the inclusion manager and the deputy head; pastoral. Year managers move up with each cohort except for the Year 7 manager who retains the necessary close familiarity with feeder primary schools and transition issues.

The development officers for the sports and arts programmes and the community manager are similarly given the freedom to act on behalf of The Campus in negotiations with outside agencies in the development of their aspects of The Campus' work. The link governor for extended services is a local resident and runs one of the clubs for local senior citizens.

These are two schools that do not see any disjuncture between raising standards of attainment, and of wider achievement, and ensuring that the needs of the whole child are met. We have characterised how the school approaches this with two principles: *putting the child at the centre* and *as focusing the work*



(of the two schools) on learning. However, this is an artificial distinction because the freedoms offered by workforce remodelling have been used creatively to enable teachers to focus on delivering high-quality lessons and supporting pupils' learning, and at the same time to create a range of roles to support pupils as learners, as individuals with other needs and to meet a range of other needs in the neighbourhood.

### ***Putting the child at the centre***

The approach has been to re-engineer the school structures and routines to meet the needs of the child and at the same time to create working arrangements with other agencies better placed to address the needs that spring from family functioning and socio-economic circumstances. A multi-agency working group was put in place in 2003. As other schools in the area have developed their extended services provision this has somewhat withered because of the increased demands on social care and healthy professionals and other specialist services.

Beauherne Primary School's behaviour policy has been used as an exemplar across Kent. It is detailed without being rigid and based on the school's three golden rules: 'Think before you act'; 'Learn as much as you can and let others do the same'; and 'Care for everyone and everything – make the right choice, it's your choice'. The staff handbook emphasises rewards before sanctions. In 2004 a den was established – a small room equipped with learning resources and space for up to two children and one adult. It is not used as a punishment room but rather children may choose to go there if they are having trouble in managing their emotions. Its use has declined since 2004 as far fewer children are absconding from lessons or the school site.

Services and programmes have been incrementally established to meet needs as they were identified and as opportunities

became available. A pre-school learning alliance nursery on the Beauherne site was developed into the privately run City View Nursery as part of The Campus. This nursery now meets the needs of a significant number of school-age mothers from across East Kent. The curriculum and administrative arrangements for students with young children is very supportive so they can adjust their curriculum to fit in with their other responsibilities, for example some students in Year 11 are scheduled as part of sixth form studies. Sixth form retakes in maths and English are taken in the evening as part of the adult education provision.

### ***Focusing on learning***

**I feel like a professional; I have time for planning and preparing and I know my task is to deliver quality learning experiences.**

In Beauherne each teacher's planning folder is reviewed every Monday morning by the head of school. An NQT spoke of assessing children's work every day. There is a formal assessment week every term when SATs papers are taken and levelled and outcomes fed back to parents.

In Canterbury High School homework is called 'learning practice' at Key Stage 3 and 'qualification prep' at Key Stage 4. All teachers set tasks on the same day and the tasks are pre-planned for each six-week module and are on the website. A learning practice club and drop-in learning practice support are available to all students.

All teachers have a mentee group of about 16 pupils that they retain up to Year 11. The focus of the mentoring is on learning, target setting and monitoring of progress. Written reports are sent to parents six-weekly.

The integrated project for Year 7 (around 14 periods per fortnight and planned with Key Stage 2 teachers at Beauherne) introduces pupils to learning styles, multiple intelligences and De Bono's thinking hats, and aims to develop key skills/core competences.

### *Curriculum restructuring*

The significant and innovative modifications to the curriculum have been made as part of a pilot programme with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). In Beauherne the curriculum has been restructured around themes to provide more suitable and relevant learning opportunities for the intake and to promote inclusion. Staff have been grouped into leadership teams for curriculum areas to deliberately include NQTs and trainees on the GTP in developing and decision making about curriculum and teaching.

In the high school there has been major innovation in the structure of the curriculum and the organisation of learning at Key Stage 3. Year 7 groups have a dedicated building just for them and a high proportion of their lessons are taught by one teacher. There is joint planning and cross-phase teaching with Beauherne. A major curriculum innovation is the cross-curricular project for all of Year 7 and 8 taught for 15 periods per fortnight. This is based on and has been piloted with the new QCA curriculum model of key skills and competencies.

At Key Stage 4 the curriculum is highly personalised, with four different curriculum pathways, plus an alternative curriculum route.

There is a strong vocational element to the curriculum in both schools with substantial take-up of BTEC and vocational GCSEs at the high school. The Campus canteen and sports facilities are extensively used for work experience placements and a planned construction skills block will further develop the vocational curriculum for both schools. The provision of courses such as the ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) Certificate of Personal Effectiveness and vocational GCSEs has helped create a culture of achievement and positively influenced GCSE results.

### *Working collaboratively and creating partnerships*

The Campus' constituent organisations follow a clear, common direction but each have the freedom to act independently in their own areas. An example would be the work of the school sports partnership as an aspect of the specialist sports college status of the high school.

There are a large number of staff who have responsibility for an aspect of the school's relationship with the wider world.

These relationships fall into three categories:

- *Delivering services:* school sports development managers, performing arts development manager, assistant head of the extended school, director of sport, youth work team.
- *Inter-agency collaboration to support pupils:* five Year managers, inclusion manager, deputy head of inclusion and pastoral, school counsellor, youth workers.
- *Developing provision and resources:* campus principal, headteacher, deputy head of finance and resources, link governor for extended services.

A key strength of the high school is its permeability to outside agencies – its link police officer runs regular surgeries in the school, for example, and the owner of The Body and Mind Gym contributes his commercial and sporting expertise as a member of The Campus management team.

### *Pupil leadership*

Both schools have significantly developed the roles of pupils and students in leading learning while acknowledging that they have some distance yet to go. In the high school the learners' parliament (the recently renamed school council) has, since September 2007, taken a step further to create five action teams, each based on one of the ECM

outcomes. The teams are led by students, who then recruit others from the student body to join the team. The 'enterprise' team is involved in running activities and fundraising, the 'be safe' team is looking at improving safety to and from school and in providing self-defence lessons, the 'health' team has produced leaflets to promote the work of the school nurse, while the 'enjoy and achieve' team has been canvassing student opinion on how lessons can be improved in order to inform their meetings with faculty heads. In addition, there is a student-run sports council and three students sit on the extended school committee.

At Beauherne Primary School the school council consists of two representatives elected from each class and includes pupils of very different abilities. They are guided on the sorts of issues that they can make decisions on but they have a budget of £300 per year to spend. They demonstrate maturity in dealing with school issues – for example, their understanding of the punishment and rewards systems, recognising the need for them and understanding the implications of a wide range of behaviours. All Year 6 pupils are members of one of five playground squads responsible for playtime equipment and leading younger pupils in playtime games. Training has been provided by the school sports coordinator at the high school.

## Conclusions

For these two federated schools pupil development and community development are inextricably linked. Each is on a rising trajectory on the current limited measures of school standards. But these measures do not take account of the extent to which these schools have embraced the imperatives behind the ECM agenda. While we lack the tools with which to evaluate the effect that schools such as these make on attitudes and aspirations and while progress in social skills and personal and emotional development is graspable only through proxy measures such as reductions in playground incidents, then the impact of these schools is only partially recognised.

The goal of the Canterbury Campus to be a significant agent for community development cannot escape the staff while they are confronted daily with the tasks of ameliorating the effects on their pupils of poverty, family breakdown, low aspirations and inadequate skills to function as citizens of Britain in the 21st century. But measuring progress at school level – aye, there's the rub!

# Homewood School and Sixth Form Centre

## Portrait

Homewood School and Sixth Form Centre in Tenterden is a large mixed comprehensive school set in the heart of a small town serving a large rural area of Kent. While the areas surrounding the school are affluent, and the local 'community' in the town is overwhelmingly middle class, middle aged and retired professional, there are small pockets of rural deprivation and isolation linked to demographic movement and the demise of local farming communities.

The school is the largest in Kent and the third largest in England, with 2,057 students, including 727 students in Key Stage 5. It draws its intake from 45 rural village primary schools, covering 12 local parishes; half the pupils use the school bus service. The school employs 280 associate and teaching staff. It has a budget of £9.3 million.

Established on an extensive 45-acre campus the school boasts a professionally equipped theatre and dance studios, a newly opened vocational centre, a school farm that includes a 'rare breeds programme' linked into Plumpton Agricultural College, the recently opened Knowledge, Information and Communication Centre, sports hall, new gymnasium and a restaurant. The excellent facilities include refurbished science laboratories, a year-old design technology block and music recording studio. Home Farm Children's Nursery, which is a registered charity, is open daily between 8.00am and 6.00pm and staffed by full-time community

staff. The school recently gained Quality in Study Support (QiSS) and Quality in Extended Schools (QES) Advanced status, reflecting its extensive range of well-managed services, fully utilising an excellent range of resources.

Homewood School is popular with parents, attracting students from the nearby urban area of Ashford in a local authority that retains a grammar school system. Approximately two thirds of students take the bus to school.

The numbers of children sitting the selective test in Kent's many rural primary schools is declining, demonstrating that many parents approve of what Homewood has to offer. In 2002 the school became a performing arts specialist college, focusing on dance, drama and music with primary linkage. Its second specialism is vocational education.

The overwhelming majority of students are white. Just under five per cent of students have special educational needs (SEN) statements or are School Action Plus and a further 12 per cent of pupils with SEN are supported at School Action. Eligibility for free school meals is just under six per cent.

## What steers the school: vision, values and professional competences

### School purposes

The school's key purpose as identified in its prospectus is to 'help all learners fulfil and exceed their potential so that they can be successful in life', and the school does indeed put young people at the centre of everything it does; many exceed their potential in a diverse range of ways. There is a wide definition of who the learners are: *"the six-month-old in the nursery and the 80+ year old who comes in as part of community access"*.

The vision of the leadership team is strongly shaped by Homewood being a comprehensive

school in an authority that retains selection and serving a large rural area with great variation in socio-economic status. According to the director of the extended school, *“everything linked to ECM [Every Child Matters] is designed to support the children and young people, develop them into independent adults with skills to thrive in the 21st century and enable them to contribute to their communities as valued citizens”*.

But the school also sees itself as a bridge, a place where learning, support, advice and guidance are available to meet the needs of the community. It recognises the contribution it must make to support the growth of the neighbourhood and the development of community cohesion and sustainability. The opening of the nursery was a response to the absence of any full-time daycare provision in the area with the consequent restrictions on opportunities for parents of young children to seek work or further training.

The community dimension of specialist arts college status has been a major factor in shaping how the school has developed as an extended school. The professional standard theatre that is widely used was built because there was no public performance space in the school's 100 square mile catchment area.

The director of the arts college says *“Specialist status [brought] the licence to be creative [and] has helped shape the development of curriculum and wider extended services over the last six years”*. It gave an excuse and a mandate to unblock the stranglehold of the core subjects, facilitated by specialist school funding. This in turn has led to a re-examination of how the specialism impacts on all curriculum subjects driven through the arts college plan. It is blurring the normal definitions of key stages and curriculum and dismantling traditional curriculum models driven by the examination system in order to develop a variety of learning pathways for young people, for parents/carers and the wider

community. Developments include a Year 11 Key Stage 5 model with online learning opportunities; implementation of a pilot undergraduate course in Year 13; more specialist diplomas; and increased collaborative work with other centres, primarily linked to the school's second specialism.

The ECM agenda is integral to all aspects of the school's work but has not determined how Homewood has developed. According to the vice principal, *“ECM and the strands of the core offer provide a ‘focusing mechanism’ which enables everyone to identify what they are doing”*. The school uses their own ‘internal self-evaluation form’ (SEF) to help the leadership team to capture what is going on and classify their interventions and initiatives against the five ECM outcomes.

### Ethos

The staff have a strong sense of identity, as important members of a team working in a positive and forward-looking environment; good working relationships exist between teachers and the large range of ‘associate’ staff, demonstrated by strong communications and lunch and leisure time spent together. Relationships between staff and students are also positive, open and friendly. Students in turn are positive about the school, enjoying its social life, the range of activities (particularly sports) on offer and the opportunity to move on with study and to take courses when they are ready.

This key value is widely shared and a sense of common purpose permeates all aspects of life at Homewood. Staff at all levels are committed, have ambitions for the school and feel they have a voice in how the school is run. They admit to working very hard but feel rewarded by being part of an innovative and creative school.

## Extended services on offer

The school has an impressive varied menu of voluntary learning activities that take place before school, at lunchtime and after school. These include: study support, residentials and holiday programmes for pupils, family learning activities including art, pottery, cookery and sports as well as parenting support opportunities, programmes for primary pupils such as visits to the farm, and Saturday and holiday learning opportunities open to all the community. As well as providing access to community groups to the sports and arts facilities the school also acts as the venue for the meetings of a wide range of local societies and groups.

Six family support coordinators act as the bridge between home and school, supporting parents and liaising as necessary with specialist health and welfare agencies.

The school has been proactive in establishing relationships with all their key agencies and multi-agency meetings take place each term with between 20–25 professionals, who share, discuss individual cases and agree targets. As a forum for coordination, the meetings are able to address protocols for working together and deal with difficulties and delays in accessing services.

## Impact on standards

### Learning

#### *Outcomes and impact*

Standards of attainment are good for a school that is in an area with grammar schools. GCSE results have recently increased, by 10 per cent, to 68 per cent of pupils gaining 5A\*–C. The percentage achieving level 2 including English and maths has remained steady, at around 36 per cent. SATs are increasing.

Contextual value added (CVA) is very good: Key Stages 2–4 at 1011.1 and Key Stages 3–4 at 1014.3, and attendance is good.

These narrow measures of attainment can be validly supplemented by other indicators of progress in learning. About a quarter of the students take part in arts programmes in day centres for older people and residential homes around the school, an aspect of the community dimension of the school's specialist arts college status. Students assess these through interviews with the residents and use the findings to design choreographed performances back in school.

### What supports learning?

#### *Redesigned structures and services*

In a very large school students need to feel they are known and understood. The school has created a vertical tutor group structure across Years 7–10, thus creating five 'mini schools' each named after one of the Kent 'Cinque Ports'. There are 360 students in each mini school with additional Key Stage 5 students associated with it. A family support coordinator is attached to each mini school. Review, target setting and reporting takes place with all students every eight weeks. The new mini school structure is being reviewed and plans are being developed to provide an enhanced student services centre, further linked into multi-agency working. Diversity and inclusion is facilitated by the manageable size of the schools allied to the range of the curriculum offer.

There is a director of Key Stage 5 and an inclusion manager.

#### *Redesigning the curriculum*

Students now complete Key Stage 3 over two years in Years 7 and 8, in what is a 'stage' rather than 'age'-related curriculum. Key Stage 3 tests are taken a year early, and the results are therefore somewhat depressed, but the school believes pupil needs are better met by being able to start Key Stage 4 a year early. The Key Stage 3 'Total Curriculum' consists of integrated modules requiring a multi-disciplinary approach, the purpose of which



is to smooth the transition process from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. It enshrines creativity and the arts and the education of the whole person, with, for example, music playing a key part rather than its traditional rather restricted and isolated curriculum offering with 'real' music happening after school. Key Stage 3 students have their own block to facilitate social interaction, designed to meet all their needs. While this approach appears to ease the transition between Key Stages 2 and 3, some students then experience difficulty in adjusting to a more formal curriculum in Key Stage 4.

Thus the approach has been to address learning and the support of pupils with two different and radical strategies which support each other. Each mini school leader also takes responsibility for aspects of the curriculum with their school linked to a group of curriculum subjects. In this way student welfare and academic support and progress are interlinked.

At Key Stage 4 Homewood is building on its second specialism of vocational education.

Key Stage 4 commences in Year 9. From September 2007 a new Key Stage 5 curriculum offer in Year 11 includes AS level as well as vocational (BTEC, GNVQ) and additional GCSE choices. A2 is offered in Year 12. Year 13 now provides access to Open University foundation courses. Timetable turnover takes place in June and not September, removing the 'dead' time at the end of the summer term.

Extended services have themselves led directly to curriculum development. For example, photography started as an adult learning opportunity, its popularity led to it also becoming a study support activity, which in turn led to it becoming a GCSE subject and now it is available in AS and A2.

The boundaries between normal lessons and study support activities have been blurred by the introduction in September 2007 of a timetabled 40-minute curriculum enrichment'

session for Years 7–10. Designed to meet the needs of pupils who, because of transport difficulties, cannot attend after-school clubs and activities and funded from the extended services budget, a wide range of activities take place across the campus one morning a week. The staff identified activities they wanted to run and students on the student council identified things that they would like the chance to try.

A wide range of sports and also activities as diverse as jewellery making, photography, bird watching, dissection, digital music making and BMX, are provided. Both teaching and associate staff lead the sessions, sometimes working in teams with large groups of students. By opening these activities to all three key stages the school is strengthening relationships and increasing its social capital. Enrichment is in its infancy but indications are that it is leading to greater participation in after-school study support. Numbers are increasing in after-school clubs including a Samba band and other music activities.

Other activities such as visits and field trips further blur the distinction between what goes on as part of the curriculum and what goes on outside. A 'Creative Partnerships' initiative helped curriculum teams focus on an aspect of the curriculum and design it so that it would be delivered outside curriculum time. The results included a radio station, planned, programmed and led by the students, providing an opportunity for student leadership and voice.

Many of the extended services outcomes are long term and are difficult to measure in two or three years, but the school is sure that specialist arts college status has had huge benefits in increasing opportunities for students to become involved and develop their confidence. Progression routes include Ballet Rambert, National Theatre, art school, boxing and farming.

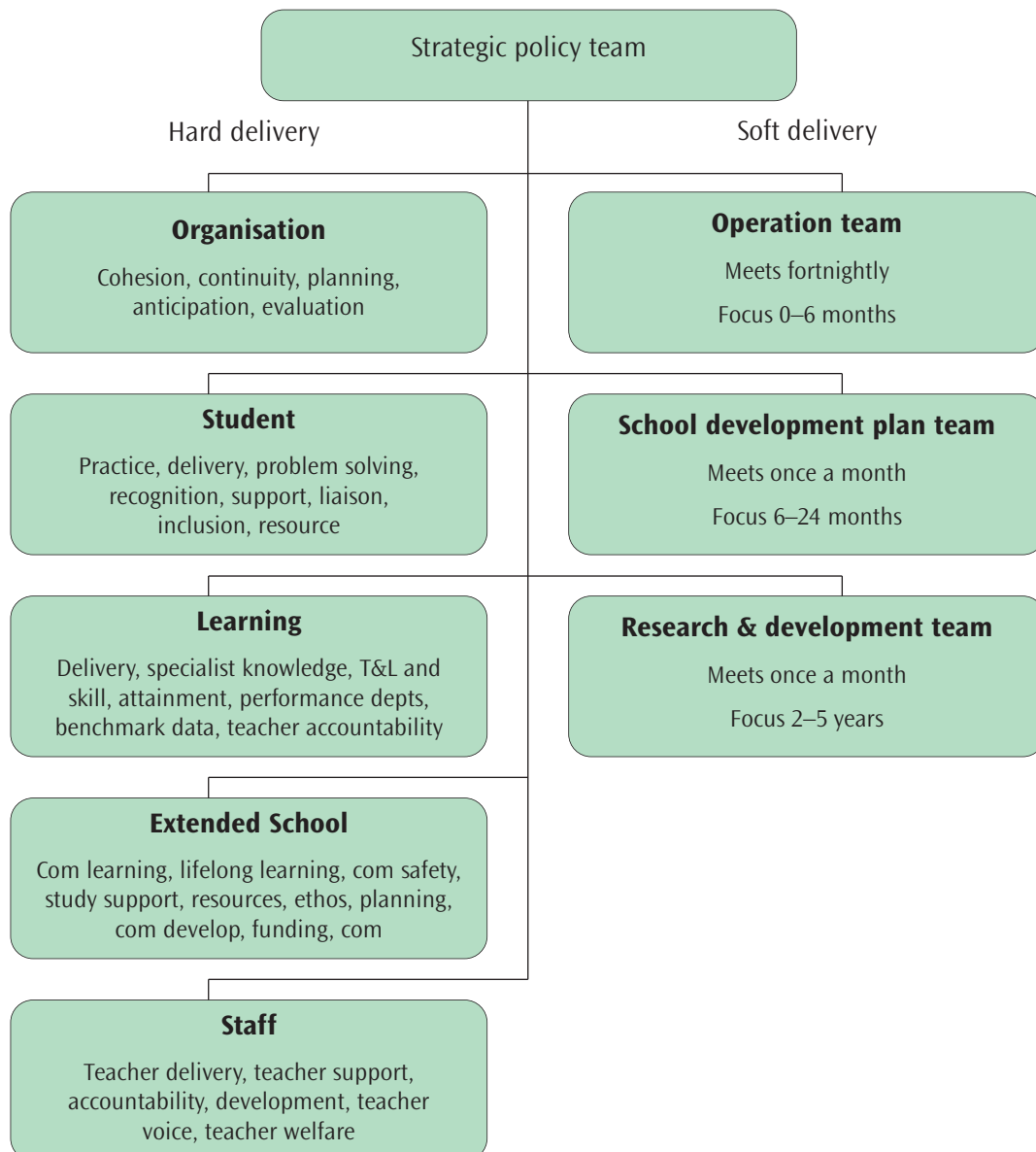
## Leadership

### Individual and collective efficacy

Homewood's principal is passionate about learning and committed to distributed leadership. He considers everyone to be part of the decision-making process: *"Leadership is in everybody's hands, whether you're an NQT [newly qualified teacher], someone who runs the kitchen or a student"*. He emphasised the need to delegate responsibility with a shared

vision and common purposes: *"A principal cannot lead in traditional ways. He/she must be able to let those with expertise lead and have autonomy. The task is simply HUGE but it must always focus back on learners and their learning needs. This includes the six-month-old in the nursery and the 80+ year old who comes in as part of community access"*.

A new planning and decision-making structure was set up in 2003 to lead and manage a very large school with a complex and expanding set of extended services (see Figure 1).





The 'soft delivery teams' provide leadership in setting the direction of the school, promoting innovation. They enable young and new members of staff to take on leadership responsibilities because they have representation from all tiers in the school. They have reporting mechanisms across the whole school and guidelines on when to take the initiative and when to consult with others. As 'think tanks' for the strategic policy team they enable it to carry out its function to 'promote informed educational discussion and avoid implementation pragmatics'.

The vice principal responsible for extended school services believes that distributed leadership has led to rapid development in all areas across the school, especially in the last three years: *"Where everything used to go to the senior leadership team, now teams are able to focus on and make decisions for the areas that directly involve them"*. She knows she has a great deal of autonomy where developments do not impinge on other teams. She also knows the principal's door is always open when she needs direct access to him.

Other staff spoke cogently and with understanding about the leadership structure. One member of staff described the model as *"controlled distributive leadership with a lot of monitoring"*. The current principal and several of the vice principals have been at the school for more than 10 years; stability has supported the building of trust and shared understandings.

## Staff development and leadership development

Taking on leadership responsibilities is seen as part of the staff development process. Teachers are encouraged to take on multiple roles. One mini school leader describes the student leadership team, of which she is also a member, as a *"mixed bag of staff with*

*different experiences and backgrounds"*.

The role is enjoyable but requires training and coaching.

Homewood encourages staff to take a leadership secondment, further qualifications and to carry out action research projects in the school, the findings of which can subsequently be used to influence practice.

Increased provision of extended services has led to expansion in the number of 'associate staff' to over 100, some of whom are ex-students or parents, who have often had a long voluntary association with the school. They are integral within the leadership and staffing of the school – teaching and other responsibilities are both highly valued, leading to excellent cooperative working relationships and high levels of trust between teaching and associate staff. The inclusivity extends to the many professionals from other agencies with whom good relationships exist.

Succession planning is an important part of the strategic policy team's function and is supported for teaching staff by the highly distributed leadership structure. This is allied to a strategy of 'growing your own' of recruiting parents and former students. For instance, former students have returned as teachers, librarians, technicians as well as volunteers. Currently six members of staff in the arts are former students.

## Pupil leadership

Visitors to the school receive a warm welcome. Students are on a rota to act as school ambassadors; working in pairs from different Year groups they receive visitors and deal with enquiries.

The main vehicle for student voice is the student council. Its many activities include: consulting others through focus groups, questionnaires and within subject

departments; reviewing the school's welfare and behaviour policy; attending governor sub-committees; training for and participating in staff interviews; and working as 'student ambassadors' in reception. Students are also being trained in lesson observation.

Students lead a range of study support activities and plan and deliver programmes across many of Homewood's feeder schools. They regularly run fund-raising activities and take full responsibility for organising the annual school prom. They are trained to mentor younger pupils and when given the opportunity, to describe what inspires and motivates them, to speak cogently, demonstrating ownership of their learning and articulating their aspirations – anything from becoming a young farmer to having a career in the National Theatre.

Students recognise their opportunities for leadership which include running the school newspaper and taking up roles as student 'captains' of sports teams as well as the student council. However, there is still work to do as some students do not relate well to the council – one student's concern was that 'naughty children' got more praise and opportunities than those that were good in class. A perceptive student described Homewood as a 'trial and error' school and suggested students should be given fuller reasons if and when things were cancelled and be taken more into the confidence of staff in a rapidly changing environment. Students plan and organise the Saturday programme, which includes a 'driving school', and also take charge of the restaurant when it is used for events. One parent told with pride how her daughter had taken the lead in dance activities, leading warm-up sessions with a group of Downs Syndrome children, while others work through physical education (PE), supporting young people with disabilities in Ashford.

As student voice is further developed into the culture, ethos, values and programme of the school, staff are realistic about the capacity of students to lead and recognise the considerable support and help they will need.

## Internal development and navigating the external world

The changes that Homewood has made over the past five years are the result of an interplay between internal drives to improve learning and responsiveness to external opportunities and needs in the community. So curriculum restructuring, the creation of mini schools and the development and expansion of extended services are all seen as related aspects of the same change processes.

At Homewood specialist status and extended services have 'grown' individuals and provided structures in which they can flourish and learn new skills. One example is that six members of staff in the arts are former students. Parents have been deliberately recruited to fulfil other new roles.

A remodelled workforce requires the management of expectations, contracts, terms and conditions of non-teaching professionals. Associate staff bring to their new roles a much wider range of backgrounds, experiences and expectations, presenting new challenges. A major outcome of taking on extended services and developing the specialist arts college role has been the significant enhancement of leadership's understanding of and skills in managing people and resources.

## Working collaboratively and creating partnerships

The school has a number of 'partnerships' through and beyond its specialist statuses. These include sports coordinator links with Angley School, a 'Leading Edge' partnership with a school in Maidstone and the lead of an

extended schools cluster of 23 primary schools. Homewood is considering taking its model enrichment out to its feeder primary schools.

The school has been proactive in establishing relationships with all their key agencies and multi-agency meetings take place each term with between 20–25 professionals, who share, discuss case studies and agree targets. As a forum for coordination, the meetings are able to address protocols for working together and deal with difficulties and delays in accessing services.

### **Liaising with ‘the community’**

The leadership team feel that most local residents of Tenterden, mostly middle-class and retired professionals, would not choose to have such a large comprehensive school in the town even though significant numbers use the arts and sports facilities and other learning opportunities that the school provides. To increase the wider community’s awareness and active involvement, a new group of key local people has been set up to ‘vision’ the future for the school as part of its community.

The ‘community’ element of the specialist plan has focused on young people’s active involvement in day centres and residential homes around the school. About 25 per cent of the whole school population takes part, with the purpose of creating better channels of communication between the community and the school. These are assessed through interviews with centre attendees and residents and the findings used to design choreographed performances back in school.

### **Parents**

The school has an ‘open door policy’ and is very flexible in making appointments, but there is concern that the heightened security, Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks and concern fuelled by the media put some parents off from greater involvement with the school. For some the difference between

primary and secondary school was noticeable. With so many students travelling a long way to the school it is difficult for many parents to be in regular contact, and parental leadership is exercised largely by those who work at the school and those who are involved in sub-committees and focus groups; but interest is high and there were 21 nominations for the post of clerk to the governors.

## Conclusions

Homewood is an effective, innovative school in a highly competitive environment. Students and staff flourish and the school is especially strong and innovative in curricular and other learning opportunities, in its approach to student care and in its distributed leadership. The innovations and curriculum and school structure were seen by the leadership as risky, requiring very substantial redirection of staff time and resources. Skilful financial management has been essential but funding remains a constraint in making the personalisation of learning for all a reality.

Homewood also knows that there is much more to do: greater integration between Key Stage 5 and other key stages, increasing social interaction and providing more opportunities for young people to 'lead learning' are two areas. Leadership, well distributed among staff members, is increasingly shared with students; the next challenge is creating a real voice and opportunity for leadership for parents and local residents.

Extended services are seen as already producing benefits, primarily because a deeper and wider commitment to meeting the needs of all pupils and the local residents positively influences the value that they give to learning and to a notion of community.

The leadership team have strong beliefs about enabling learning across the community. It is a vision of a place of learning where the systems and structures make it possible to liberate the facilities for all learners and to respond positively to changes in technology and society. The principal is strongly aided by the commitment of the staff that has enabled change to take place at a rapid rate. His key tips for others are: first know yourself and your vision, then live it and provide opportunities for others to give of their best. In his view permission to innovate should not be sought but, in his words, "*just do it!*".

# Lister Community School

## Portrait

Lister Community School is an 11–16 comprehensive school in the London Borough of Newham. The fifth most deprived borough in England, it is one of the more densely populated and multi-cultural areas of London, has more than 20 parks and is an area richly endowed with Norman churches and Victorian architecture.

The school is located among a dense urban sprawl, approached through a series of narrow residential streets, rows of terraced homes and sections of brick low-level flats. The streets are full of parked cars, some mounting pavements, struggling for space and obscuring the view of the street. A plethora of small businesses also jostle for space with market stalls clustered around the train station. Customers are mainly from Pakistan and Bangladesh – a range of languages and voices mingle with the familiar cockney dialect.

The school building is a rambling two-storey concrete edifice lined with windows and separated from the street with newly painted high railings that seem unending. It has been extended in a series of phases since the 1940s. It is unclear where the entrance is until a walk around the railings reveals a bright, newly constructed reception area. This cheers the visitor, who is able to study the artwork of the students while listening to lively, busy chatter as the school day begins. Over the next two years the old and tired school buildings will be demolished to make way for a new school as part of the government's Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme.

At the end of 2007 the roll of the school was 1,373 pupils. There were 100 full-time

teaching staff and 80 student support and administrative staff. Nearly a third of all pupils are classified as having special educational needs (SEN). There are 15 students with exceptional needs, three of whom are wheelchair users. There are also currently 19 Deaf students as Lister is a resourced secondary school for the Deaf and Partially Hearing.

The school is part of a soft federation, a working alliance of 15 schools who share a common vision statement, work in concert on a development plan and agree joint outcomes. The newly launched E13 Learning Village is described as a coalition centred on lifelong learning for all ages. The E13 postal district includes 57 per cent of Lister students.

PALS (Plaistow, Southern Road Primary Schools and Lister Community Group) is a coalition whose purpose is to enable parents to contribute to local community development, to strengthen school partnerships and to provide support for children and young people's welfare.

Lister has specialist status in performing arts. It is an Artsmark Gold and Sportsmark Gold school in recognition of the range and quality of its provision in these curricular areas. In 2003 it was granted recognition as a full service extended school and in 2005 it also became a mentoring school.

## What steers the school: vision, values and professional competences

The school has a strong commitment to educational inclusion, an integral element of its mission statement:

**As an inclusive school community, we are committed to placing creativity at the heart of the learning experience. Our purpose is to ensure an educational experience which promotes and achieves**

excellence. By nurturing the values, confidence and skills of students, staff and the community, we will unleash the talents and energy of the individual to prepare them for the emerging opportunities of the 21st century.

## Extended services on offer

### Parenting and family support

Three family support workers work with parents and carers, running coffee mornings and toddler groups either in Lister or in primary schools where many parents feel more comfortable. Particular support is targeted on children at risk of exclusion and home visits are paid to vulnerable groups, made possible by effective referral systems among agencies such as social work and the police. Family support workers describe themselves as filling the gap that falls between the remits of those respective agencies. Parental support groups also hold meetings off site, including literacy sessions for dyslexic adults and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes led by a Somali-speaking tutor.

Initiatives are also taken to make contact with hard-to-reach groups – Somali parents, Bangladeshi parents and parents of SEN children. The agendas for work with these groups are shaped around their expressed needs and through intelligence gathering across agencies. Saturday classes for adult and family learning include literacy, information and communications technology (ICT), Bengali, a science homework club, women's fitness, a crèche and an internet café. Bengali language family learning evenings have brought in directors of study and curriculum advisers to explain school procedures.

## Impact on standards

### Learning

When the new headteacher was appointed in 2000 it was on the back of a promise to build a community ethos and raise standards of achievement. In the intervening seven years the story is one of a slow but determined commitment to working with the community to improve the quality of life for children and their families.

In October 2007 the school announced through its community newsletter 'Our best ever GCSE results', with 54 per cent of students gaining 5A\*–C passes as compared with 43 to 46 per cent in 2005–06 and 36 to 37 per cent in 2003–04. This is attributed to the range and quality of support given to young people, meeting the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda through an evolving range of engaging activities and outreach to parents and to other adults with a stake in improving young people's lot.

The school works on a number of fronts to overtake the ECM agenda, promoting both excellence and enjoyment in curricular subjects and in learning more broadly defined. This assumes a variety of short, medium and long-term initiatives, remedial, pre-emptive and capacity building:

- direct out-of-hours work with young people on curriculum subjects and preparation for exams; this is essentially short term and remedial;
- collaboration with primary schools to better prepare children for secondary school and to ease transition; this is short to medium term and pre-emptive;
- partnerships with parents to help them support their own children's' learning and well-being; this is a medium to long-term strategy;



- out-of-hours activities to broaden interests, enhance self-efficacy and economic well-being; this is a medium and long-term strategy;
- investment in community activity in order to build social capital and regenerate a sense of optimism and agency; this is a longer-term ambition.

### Indicators of success

Staff of Lister Community School and external partners point to a range of positive outcomes and continuing progress made over the past few years, both in respect of immediate returns and longer-term investments, such as:

- growing involvement of adults in attending events and acquiring skills;
- increasing participation of parents in activities designed to support them and their children;
- expansion of learning opportunities within the community;
- collaboration with primary schools, easing transition from Year 5/6 to 7, addressing student disaffection and regression in achievement;
- removing barriers to learning – disaffection, anxiety, emotional and behavioural difficulties and peer pressures;
- better uses of data and information from partner agencies;
- direct support in class and in out-of-hours provision for students who are underachieving;
- emphasis on a more learner-centred pedagogy.

The success of these is measured by indicators of success such as:

- Expanding the activity of the PALS community groups with new classes and new activities with a focus on support for parents.

- A high and increasing demand for places in foundation and higher level English classes for adults, outstripping supply. Parents and carers now express greater confidence in approaching the school and are more likely to support its efforts.
- Family learning opportunities have been of direct benefit to students by helping parents to give greater informed and emotional support for their children.
- The breakfast club has also demonstrated positive gains in punctuality, attendance and readiness for school.
- The lunchtime session in maths for Year 9 is credited with raised maths attainment for those who attended.
- Improvement in transitional arrangements between primary and secondary school is seen as explaining improvement in GCSE results since 2005.
- A small-scale controlled research by the Saturday school teacher demonstrated a positive gain in SATs by those who attended compared to non-attending peers.

### What supports learning?

#### *Intervention and support for pupils*

Intervention and support for pupils is addressed directly through classroom learning and teaching, through out-of-school hours activities, and through others who mediate children and young people's learning – parents, peers, extended family members, professionals from other services and community volunteers. ECM outcomes, such as 'staying safe' and 'enjoying and achieving' are prerequisites for effective classroom learning and recognise the importance of addressing emotional issues within a clear hierarchy of needs. The breakfast club operates from 7.45am each morning on a drop-in basis and accommodates, on average, about 50 students.

Breakfast, free, healthy and winner of a quality award, is described by staff as noticeably increasing pupils' ability to engage with learning in the classroom.

Interventions designed specifically to raise examination attainment include mentoring of D-C Year 11 borderline students and a maths after-school club once a week from 3.30pm to 6pm attracting around 50 students from Year 8 onwards. Year 10 and 11 students attend at critical points while Year 9 students tend to appear in larger numbers before Key Stage 3 tests in May. At lunchtime senior students supervise and support maths for Years 7 and 8, supervised by a member of teaching staff.

As well as extra help with homework and preparation for tests and exams, study support offers young people opportunities to acquire new interests, to experience success and fulfilment in new untried areas. On any given evening there are up to 40 clubs or activities available for students after school, including performing and visual arts, sports and hobbies, language and literacy.

The summer school programme, structured around the five ECM outcomes, provides a safe place for young people in both a physical and emotional sense. There are supplementary schools for Arabic children and for Somali adults and their children as well as literacy and numeracy booster groups and nurture groups.

The peer mentoring and senior students scheme aims at increasing participation from senior students who benefit from the support they give to Year 7 students. Before selection they are given clear guidelines as to the skills and dispositions required and the tasks involved, including help at parents' evenings, and assistance in setting up and running clubs.

The school behaviour policy is premised on positive relationships between staff and students and between students and their

peers. A behaviour improvement project, seen as a precondition for effective learning and teaching, takes a supportive needs-focused route rather than a sanctions route. Bookshop, theatre and cinema visits and gifts of MP3 players are rewards for good behaviour, effort and achievement, accompanied by one-to-one counselling for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties plus in-class support for those students. In class mentors also support a small number of students in maths and writing.

### *Audit and needs identification*

Key to extended provision is the systematic mapping of services for children within the borough. This provides a basis for feasibility studies and filling the gaps, setting up services to meet needs that fall between the remits of different providers. This is complemented by provision mapping within the school to identify where further support is needed.

The federation is moving towards a more systematic way of auditing parental needs with a type of 'family road test' which applies to all mid-phase admissions of new families and for all families who access the service. The Open University is a source for accessing management information expertise. In order to meet the very diverse range of needs and expectations of those most in need the school audits staff expertise with a view to creating appropriate learning opportunities and to determine the nature of the offer that can be made to adults.

### *Communication*

Communication of purposes, provision and progress takes a plethora of forms, constantly under revision and rethinking.

The school publishes its own newsletters as well as disseminating newsletters from other statutory and community agencies. Flyers are distributed wherever people come together in adult classes, support groups or electronic user



groups. Information is circulated in staff pigeon holes, student post, displays in the reception area, in local libraries and in doctors' surgeries. The school's interactive website showcases its activities and allows visitors to download music composed by students, to watch rehearsals such as Guys and Dolls, or to watch highlights of a recent event.

The ICT publicity project was established to create a sense of ownership among students and families by involving them in the design and generation of publicity through posters, postcards, regular news items and web links. Local, and sometimes national, press is used to publicise school events and successes, with regular press releases to Newham community newspapers. Articles in the Newham magazine are distributed to all households. Family support workers and the PALS team also distribute literature, translate materials, make referrals, offer advice on employment benefits and advise on wraparound childcare. Good student work is captured on digital video and displayed on interactive whiteboards and plasma screens in the reception area.

Face-to-face communication assumes a number of different forms. As well as home visiting and taking information and advice to community sites where parents are, parents are invited termly to meet with Year 7 and 8 directors of study and members of the extended school team. A post-it board at school events such as the bring-a-dish and performing arts evening is provided for parents, students and others to suggest ideas for improvement in learning and teaching, after-school provision or any other ideas for school improvement. There are information desks at open days and parent evenings while the community learning manager staffs a stall at events organised by the community.

While this saturation coverage is seen as highly important it is also acknowledged that the most effective communication is by word of mouth, formally within streets, homes and

neighbourhoods, as people experience for themselves acquisition of new skills, new hope and potentially life-changing opportunities.

### *Monitoring, evaluation and feedback*

Lister Community School is a self-evaluating school, data and information-rich with monitoring and evaluation built into every initiative and activity and involving all staff and students in reflection and critique. All staff are expected to engage in at least one peer observation a year, a process seen as formative and knowledge building for both parties. There is a commitment to regular mapping of provision within the school as well as outside it. Study support, Saturday schools, Easter and summer schools are subject to systematic evaluation with references both to ECM and curricular achievement outcomes.

Numerous channels are used to tune into the voice of users and creators of services. The headteacher keeps in close touch with students, personally interviewing Year 7–11 students in groups of three with a focus on learning in maths, English, science and humanities and other issues which they may raise about school life and learning. These feedback sessions are complemented by lesson observation and work scrutiny. This helps to address inconsistencies between and within subject teaching, in relation to marking, for example.

Complaints from parents are invited and dealt with sensitively and proactively. An operational group works across all partnerships to ensure coherence and common purpose. Chaired by the assistant head (community and lifelong learning) it monitors and evaluates existing provision to ensure that the overall mission of the school is reflected in practice. Cross membership of this group with PALS is a mechanism to ensure that the community voice is heard.

Change teams revisit the aims, mission statements and shared principles and how

these are perceived and enacted by all Lister staff and partners. All these forms of monitoring and evaluation feed into development planning which is extensive, detailed and inclusive, and provides Ofsted, as well as staff, with a comprehensive, thoughtfully constructed self-evaluation form (SEF).

## ECM outcomes

The headteacher describes the ECM agenda as 'nectar' as its outcomes and key principles resonate with the school's values and priorities, and its focus on the whole child. The school can point to tangible impacts under each of the five ECM headings.

*Keeping safe:* in a turbulent community with high rates of crime the school offers a safe haven and ensures stringent safety measures. Its extended activities offer a congenial place to meet friends and collaborate with adults in an informal and relaxed environment. Extra-curricular activities and a wide range of study support activities keeps young people off the street and out of potential trouble. Visits from the crime prevention police team help to identify risk and how to steer clear of criminal activity.

The school safety net identifies young people at risk, keeps in touch with new referrals and targets support for those who are a danger to themselves through sexual activity or self-harm. Buddy systems, vigilance and good communication raise awareness of students with low self-esteem, who are anxious or afraid of bullying. A girls group provides an opportunity for issues to be aired in confidence. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning provides opportunities for students to voice their concerns. Placing pedagogy to the fore in continuing professional development (CPD) contributes to making classrooms

psychologically and emotionally safe places to be.

*Enjoyment and achievement:* the school development plan (2007–08) states that all lessons strive to meet this second ECM objective. CPD, peer observation, maintaining open channels of communication with students, teachers and other staff all combine to ensure that enjoyment and achievement are given high priority in lessons and are mutually reinforcing.

The wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer ensures that there is something for everyone. Efforts are made to fill the gaps as new needs are identified. As the school is not a convenient site for all students, collaboration with youth and community agencies helps to identify stimulating places where young people can go out of school hours.

One of the primary functions of study support is to inject fun and enjoyment into learning so that it is not simply extra 'work' but offers a sense of achievement through mastering a new skill or developing a new interest. Through one-to-one and group tuition students struggling with maths or reading can gain a new sense of self-efficacy. Creating catch-up systems and a bank of resources for completing course work allows students to work independently.

*Making a contribution:* students are encouraged to make a contribution to school life through opportunities to exercise responsibility and to take leadership roles such as monitoring of doors and computer areas during breaks and lunchtimes, helping to establish a calm and productive atmosphere in the resources areas as well as giving help to students struggling with ICT. Older students mentor younger children both within the school day and in study support and Saturday schools.

The school's podcasting is not only a communication device but also an attractive opportunity for young people to make a contribution. It encourages students to engage in greater depth with what is going on around the school, to spot significant stories worth telling and to work with teachers to disseminate those stories. This requires visual and technological skills, in research, planning and recording skills, social and inter-personal skills and the communication skills which come into play in negotiation skills involving listening, talking and writing.

Making a contribution within the community is fostered through students visiting and working with primary school children, taking on leadership roles in sports, festivals and playing an active role in planning and organising parent and community events.

*Economic well-being:* facilities with podcasting also contribute to economic well-being by enhancing a range of skills valued by employers, not least the skills of taking initiative, working with others and a willingness to learn – three of the attributes most looked for by employers. Study support and other out-of-school hours activities and targeting of borderline under-achievers have been shown to raise attainment in SATs and GCSE passes, used as a first line sifting mechanism by employers.

Greater numbers are now staying on in school and numbers of NEET young people (not in education, employment or training) are diminishing, directly attributable to the opportunities offered by extended activities in the school, in the borough and through inter-school collaboration. There is a growing increase in enquiries from the community at reception and steady attendance at support groups is being maintained.

*Staying healthy:* evidence of progress towards a healthy lifestyle is measured by increasing participation in sporting activities and through

monitoring of attendance by the sports letting manager. The breakfast club provides healthy food and encourages good dietary habits. Interventions with parents have increased parental awareness of healthy eating and lifestyle. A key strand of the PALS initiative is to support parents in helping their children develop healthy habits and to take responsibility. Parent classes also provide training in first aid.

## Leadership

### Individual and collective efficacy

#### *Staff appointments and professional development*

Careful attention is paid to appointments as getting the right people on board is seen as critical to the purposes, ethos and outreach of an extended school. At the point of recruitment all staff are made aware of the school's mission and priorities, its equal opportunities commitment and code of conduct, followed by induction into procedures with clear priority given to the ECM agenda.

Specific skills sets are drawn up for appointment to posts such as refugee support workers or sports letting officer and frontline reception staff as it is their direct encounters with parents and the public that can inhibit or enhance engagement with the school.

The community learning manager disseminates research findings and opportunities for professional development while benefiting from training that creates spaces for reflection and networking together with family learning workers.

Away days for headteachers and members of the extended school teams across the cluster open up opportunities to further common understanding, to share principles of practice and to examine how these principles are being

realised within schools, centres and networks across the cluster.

### *Broadening the curriculum*

Broadening the 'reductionist curriculum' together with accountability mandates on 'core' subjects is a constant source of pressure on staff to focus on tests and targets. For senior and middle leaders helping teachers see beyond the immediate targets and performativity measures has to be balanced against the pressing need to cover the curriculum and 'deliver' results. Embedding the five outcomes integrally within all teaching is described by the head as a long-term goal and a present challenge.

These issues impact directly on dilemmas in distributing leadership. Commitment at departmental subject level does not always coincide with wider commitments at school level and brilliant teachers who could assume leadership roles can prove resistant to extending their sphere or influence. Good leaders of children are not necessarily good leaders with their peers and professional development, promotion, retention and succession planning are required to be treated as a continuing priority.

## Internal development and navigating the external world

In order to meet the school's wide-ranging ambitions the staffing structure has been remodelled with leadership roles and responsibilities clearly demarcated. The senior leadership team comprises nine people – the headteacher, three deputy heads and five assistant heads. Their remits are:

- deputy head: curriculum, learning and achievement
- deputy head: inclusion and support for learning, behaviour and achievement

- deputy head: professional standards and development to support achievement
- assistant head: director of learning
- assistant head: primary and community learning
- assistant head: support for learning
- assistant head: personal development
- assistant head: school manager

Other key roles in support of the ECM and community development agendas are:

- sports letting officer
- community learning manager
- family support workers
- refugee support worker
- personal assistant to the extended school team
- student support centre manager
- summer school coordinator

The governing body is composed to reflect the extended compass of the school's activities and joint governor's group meetings are also held at cluster level.

## Building alliances and partnerships

Key to the concept of an extended school is the compass of activities that reach beyond the school and create networks of support for children and families. Over the past few years multi-agency partnerships have been growing apace, with a commitment to suspending judgement and learning from the differing conventions, norms and working practices of different agencies, professional and voluntary groups.

The school believes that challenges to thinking and practice is the critical core of collaboration. Priority is therefore given to

raising awareness among staff and school partners of cultural and religious differences, the importance of listening, negotiating, compromising and, as necessary, standing one's ground and managing conflict.

A longstanding partnership with Newham's Community Education and Youth Service led to the establishment of a Saturday school for Years 5 and 6 and since 2006 a summer school caters for 250 secondary students in Lister itself. Primary pupils also visit Lister to use specialist rooms and laboratories and take part in joint projects.

Partnerships centre on a wide range of sports for school students and adults, many held in the school's spacious and well-equipped gym, others held in primary schools, led by staff and students from Lister. Staff and students make a contribution to the many local authority initiatives such as Newham Local Authority's cultural harmony project and peer mentoring strategy. Both within the school and in community sites basic skills courses are provided for adults in literacy, numeracy and ICT.

The school maintains contact with Newham Sixth Form College, the Open University, the University of East London and other potential destinations for its students.

## Challenges for leadership in an extended school

Under the BSF programme a new school will be built around the existing facilities and the ongoing life of Lister Community School. Only the gymnasium and dance studios will remain. This not only presents a logistical nightmare in the short term but BSF does not, in the view of the head, meet the requirement of an extended school such as theirs. While there is some input by staff into the design, the 70m<sup>2</sup> per classroom constrains opportunities for

different modes and styles of learning, for trans-disciplinary work both within and outside classrooms. Nor does it cater for extended school activities, with insufficient room for community space.

## Conclusions

### Building bridges

At the heart of the school's commitment is to build bridges with family and community and huge efforts are made to bring parents into supportive partnerships with staff. A perennial issue is trying to inform and encourage those who opt for other schools, in some cases due to rumour and disinformation, in some cases because of religious or political leaders to whom parents look for guidance. It is a struggle for school staff to work at cross grain to what parents are being told and what they believe from other sources.

Twilight classes for young people and parents run up against family meal times and preparation for religious worship and there are difficulties in attracting girls to after-school or residential sessions due to family pressures for them to be at home and to avoid mixed-sex classes.

The head adds a final codicil to the many achievements of Lister as an extended school. Just to maintain current initiatives and to keep momentum demands a continuing sustained effort and increased investment. It needs resilience to deal with the inevitable setbacks encountered in turbulent communities. It requires encouragement and support for staff who can become demoralised by the slow pace of success and seemingly minimal returns on investment. Distributing leadership spreads responsibility but nonetheless requires an overview and joining up of the disparate strands of activity. In the end the buck stops with the head, which carries a particularly ironic reminder of the head's singular

accountability, however collaborative the effort. It is a considerable tribute to leadership, individual and shared, that Lister Community School continues to make such tangible progress against the odds.



# Seven Mills Primary School

## Portrait

Seven Mills Primary School, in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, nestles under 40-year-old high- and low-rise concrete flats, and alongside 30-year-old terraced housing. Close by, a building site sits cheek-by-jowl with towering state-of-the-art office blocks. The architectural pinnacle of the local 'Canary Wharf' landmark has been mimicked by those who have refurbished the old residential tower blocks as well as those designing the modern. Only two older, largely Victorian, buildings stand in the area: a church and a community centre, the latter partially boarded up, daubed with graffiti.

Wrapped around two sides of the school site is a community play area for children that contains brightly coloured apparatus. At one end of this L-shaped playground lies the entrance to the new Early Years building which is shaped like a ship with circular 'porthole' windows; at the other end lies the entrance for the main school. Here, the single-storey building is flat-roofed and grey, originally built in 1967. Under a small 'covered' area staff, parents and young children can huddle on a cold day, while Duplo and other toys are handed out. The nearby entrance has recently been clad with pine and enclosed to form a warm reception area with chairs and a flat screen displaying school notices. Here visitors can wait to see members of staff without being within the body of the school. The head rings a handbell at the start of school (he tells me later that he is "*a firm believer in management by walkabout*").

Next to the Early Years area there is a dedicated computer room. Outside, the playgrounds –

recently upgraded with a £276,000 'Sport England' grant – are zoned for different games or ages; bikes and football run on alternate days. The 'mobile' huts in one of the playgrounds house the music department and a classroom for parents to learn during the day.

This mixed, inner-city primary school has approximately 320 pupils on roll between the ages of three and eleven. The school has achieved a Sportsmark Gold award, the Silver Artsmark standard the Quality in Study Support (QISS) Established status in 2006 and is applying for Quality in Extended Schools (QES) Emerging status.

Statistically, the school falls in the highest quintile for Ofsted's 'school deprivation factor', with over 60 per cent of pupils eligible for free school meals. Approximately 19 per cent of pupils have special educational needs (SEN) (the average for the country); however, 65 per cent of pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL). There is a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, with approximately 60 per cent Bangladeshi, and 23 per cent indigenous white.

## What steers the school: vision, values and professional competences

### Fostering learning

There are a number of things that are particularly striking about Seven Mills. There is a calm, happy, ordered and relaxed feel to the school, a feel of the school setting its own agenda to put children first and using everything else to serve this. The senior staff, after long service, are still inspired and inspiring. They appear to look for, and use, every opportunity that comes their way in pursuit of achieving the school's aim:

To provide children with a broad and

balanced curriculum, which includes the National Curriculum, through which they may continually progress, communicate effectively and engage positively with others in all areas of their life.  
(Prospectus 2007)

The strategies employed to support this aim are rooted in activities stretching back through the school's history, predating the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda and extended schools initiative which are perceived as legitimating what was already valued and promoted within the school. They include:

- study support activities directly supporting achievement in reading, writing and mathematics;
- study support activities and trips that broaden the statutory curriculum, and are believed to contribute to developing self-esteem;
- parenting support activities;
- childcare that also reinforces other aims, such as healthy eating;
- fostering a supportive atmosphere among staff;
- fostering links with other schools and the community, reinforcing mutual responsibility;
- fostering links with business and other institutions as part of broadening pupils' perspectives.

### The importance of shared vision and trust

The head emphasised that the shared vision, particularly among managers and governors, is central to the success of the school. The relationship between the senior leaders and the governing body is good; the experience and stability of both groups appears to be an important factor, in that trust has been built, which supports an ethos of trying things out at all levels in the school. The governors are actively involved in the

school, at times contributing at the operational, as well as strategic, level.

Fundamental to what the head believes is that people have to have trust, forgiveness and the willingness to 'buy in' to what the school is trying to give them – but that the school can only do this if it has found out what they want in the first place. The compact lay-out of the school and small size means that pupils necessarily become familiar with staff, who, in turn, are able to pick up and address problems quickly. The shared vision and knowledge of each other also allows members of staff to maintain a consistent front.

### Extended services on offer

Study support clubs are run before (starting from 7.45am) and after school (until 5.15pm) on each school day, with 'springboard' and 'French' offered during the short 45-minute lunch break, and some sporting activities offered on Saturdays. The extensive programme includes seven different sporting activities, five different clubs aiming to boost/encourage achievement, a computer club, as well as library (after school) and breakfast club before school. Several of these clubs are run more than once a week, targeting different key stages. In addition, there are two for parents. The activities are run by classroom teachers, assistant staff and others employed specifically for the purpose. The purposefulness of these activities is partly monitored through attendance and parental surveys, and the potential link to attainment is also examined. In addition, pupils take part in ad hoc local events, such as exhibiting work in a local primary exhibition of art. The school also participates in cricket, netball, rugby and soccer tournaments, and runs residential field trips to support geography and history.

While some of these directly target pupil attainment, largely by providing extension



activities that complement the mainstream curriculum, others are about extending pupils' experiences of subjects not normally available in schools. Within the curriculum there is also evidence that teachers fill out the bare bones of the curriculum through linking requirements with local events that pupils know about, thus encouraging engagement.

The programme has been funded through several sources in the past, including Canary Wharf plc, the New Opportunities Fund and the Standards Fund. In addition, staff and reading and number partners, volunteer their time. Most of the after-school clubs are provided by the play centre that is hosted on the school premises and until recently run by Youth Service staff who also worked for the school. The school has now formally taken this over, thus reducing the cost to parents who no longer have to register with the Youth Service. Parents are expected to contribute to club fees (where relevant), school trips and the school fund. This, together with money from business partners, funds 'treats' such as parties, musical events and shows.

### Services for parents

Various classes, supported by the borough, are available to parents at the school and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes enable some to progress to higher courses in the local college. The reception teacher has run a well-attended reading workshop and a 'messy play workshop' focused on developing children's language skills. Other workshops and classes included developing children's number skills, healthy packed lunches, information and communications technology (ICT) and fitness classes.

The breakfast club, and some after-school provision is run by the play centre and provides 6.30am–6.30pm childcare for parents. Whereas it was discussed as providing a flexible start to the day for parents who may

need to drop off children at other schools that had the same start time, it was also perceived as beneficial by the school, providing a calm start to the day for the children who attended. Members of staff were observed as relaxed and informal, having established trusting relationships with the children. Pupils commented that they enjoyed the range of healthy food and big portions, and the choice of going out to play or going to the ICT suite afterwards. The nursery nurse spoke of the need to recruit more pupils, and thought that low numbers were in part because parents did not perceive free play as beneficial learning. The long opening hours of the school's childcare clubs prompted the deputy head to point out the contradiction in messages over work–life balance and extended schooling.

Good relationships with parents are underpinned by the school acting 'as a source of advice and support for the whole family, many of whom speak little English and are new to this country' (Ofsted 2004). There has been a 'Passport to Learning' scheme for staff and parents, and a family learning project. In addition, the school website 'points' parents to useful services. Parents have been encouraged to feed back their thoughts on aspects of study support provision, although the response rates have tended to be low. There was an underlying anxiety that if activities for parents were laid on without them being involved in organising them, it would reinforce a 'hand-out' culture.

Teachers also ensure that parents who do not read English have letters and information read to them, although it has been difficult finding translators who can meaningfully translate Sylheti. One teaching assistant spoke of there being communities within the community that the school serves, that gradually 'come on board', through carefully thought-through strategies employed in the school. Participation in school events by the Bangladeshi community, for example,

was identified as low and so the school have responded by appointing a Bangladeshi home-school worker.

## Impact on standards

### Learning

In 2004, Ofsted acknowledged that ‘attainment on entry to the nursery is very poor’. While at the end of Key Stage 1 many pupils fall below the national average for reading, writing and maths, they nonetheless consistently out-perform contemporaries with similar backgrounds. Furthermore in recent years at Key Stage 2, pupils have achieved more highly than predicted, typically attaining the national average. Significantly, there is little evidence of a ‘tail’ of poorly achieving pupils: for example, all Key Stage 2 pupils achieved level 3+ and above in English in 2006, and the 2006 profile of pupils’ average point scores peaked more tightly around ‘27–32’ than the national scores. The school’s contextual value added (CVA) in 2006 was 101.2.

The various activities offered at Seven Mills are considered valuable by members of the school. The range and timings enable pupils to attend an activity they enjoy. For example, a pupil explained that she could not go to an after-school club but would go to lunchtime clubs, which include quieter ‘friendship’ clubs, guitar lessons and French. Referring to music, one pupil explained that *“it helps my emotions when I play, if I am happy or sad”*. The school also analysed data for 13 Year 6 (2006/07) pupils who had NC levels of below 3b the previous year. All had gained 0.6–2 levels in the interim. Further analysis showed that three pupils had made gains of 1–1.3 levels in literacy, 1.3–1.6 levels in numeracy and 1.3–2 levels in science and also:

- 98–100 per cent attendance
- 100 per cent attendance at booster

- high involvement in school clubs and
- 2+ sporting activities.

This suggests that factors of achievement, good health, attendance at targeted classes, attending clubs and sporting activities may be mutually supporting each other.

More subtly, one teacher has noticed an improvement in writing, as a result of the enriched opportunities pupils have: he observed that pupils would use technical terms they had learnt in sports clubs to write more interestingly and thus reach higher levels. Similarly, he hoped that by encouraging children to coach they would develop sensitivity to the different tones and ways of giving feedback to others.

### What supports learning?

In addition to the usual complement of teachers, assistants and ‘ancillary staff’ there is a grant-funded advanced skills teacher (AST) for physical education (PE) (who is also the schools’ extended schools coordinator), a home-school liaison officer and a head and deputy head who are non-teaching. A number of staff have worked for the school for several years, most notably the head (29 years), deputy head (22 years) and the AST (12 years).

The extensive programme of study support and parenting activities was developed as a result of an audit and reflection on what was required to both support the curriculum and teach new skills. Subsequent improvement was, and continues to be, based on feedback from children, through the suggestions box and evaluation forms, parent questionnaires and ad hoc suggestions, and input from other interested parties such as the local secondary school. Registers are kept which allow teachers to monitor popularity and gender bias in the clubs. All projects have a termly plan that varies in delivery as appropriate for the content, and opportunities for pupils to celebrate their successes are offered through

performance, certificates and displays of work. Activities are advertised through noticeboards at the school entrance, posters and letters to parents, and are well attended.

The school works in conjunction with a number of health and social care agencies. The head pointed out that ECM planning had evolved through the ways that agencies worked together; however, with no more funding than before, referral was still not a swift process. Referrals are made by the school to a range of services but the most immediate support tends to come from the teaching assistants.

## Leadership

### Individual and collective efficacy

#### *Restructuring: sharing responsibility, encouraging initiative*

To enable the school's strategies for raising achievement, a radical new staffing structure was developed three years ago. The head described the need to change his working practice in order to meet businesses in ways they understood – specifically, over decent lunches rather than snatched coffees – and this required him to hand over the day-to-day running of the school to his deputy head. The time freed also allows him to work with schools experiencing difficulties, to devote more time to the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT), and to extend the school's networks and partnerships.

Teaching and learning responsibility (TLR) payments are spread widely among teachers, who work in key stage teams. Recruitment and retention problems have encouraged an ethos of developing and promoting teachers from within the school. A governor spoke of the skilfulness of the headteacher in assessing a member of staff's capabilities, delegating, and then giving staff the autonomy and confidence to move forward.

All members of staff are encouraged to contribute expertise. The home-school liaison officer and the learning mentor have both operational and strategic input. The learning mentor, who describes her role as 'removing barriers to learning', commented that the school was very good at listening to suggestions and fresh ideas. Members of 'ancillary' staff attend staff meetings and bring forward issues of concern. They, too, are encouraged to take the lead, although they less commonly perceived themselves to be classed as 'leaders'. The site manager is one of three trained mini-bus drivers in the school. Teaching assistants have been employed to do a specific job rather than to work more generally, and so there are no higher level teaching assistants; however, one of the Year 1 teaching assistants is a graduate who speaks Sylheti, Hindi and Arabic. While in general this way of working and sharing is valued because it enables the extended curriculum, there was a concern, expressed by the deputy headteacher, about the lack of official guidance on both pay and definition of roles for teaching assistants and admin staff within extended schools.

All members of staff interviewed spoke of the open, approachable, flexible relationship with the head and deputy, who they saw as giving clear leadership and direction through structure and consultation. Unpicking this, members of staff spoke of the head and deputy's interest in their well-being and professional development, and their willingness to support staff who wanted to innovate. This, in turn, caused members of staff to want to contribute flexibly and beyond what might be expected. For example, there is a willingness to pay a member of staff for one club if they choose to run two. It appears that the full and consistent way in which the head and deputy embody the vision and values of the school causes others to do the same and helps to bring about the school aim.

Statements made by staff, such as ‘children come first’, shows how principles-in-action established by the long-serving senior leaders have encouraged participation and engagement, although the head also talked of ‘bending’ his own principles to get the best for the school, for example by allowing business photo shoots in order to receive business money. The level of trust was high: the deputy telling the head of her decisions in passing, the teaching assistant exploring new strategies without constant reference to a teacher, the exchanges of information between the site manager and the deputy over tea when he opens the school, were all cited as symbols of this.

With regard to prioritising, the head’s philosophy is to consider if something is affordable in terms of time and finance, if there is enthusiasm for it, if it is what clients want and to what extent similar projects have been successful in the past.

### **Pupil leadership**

Pupils are also given formal opportunities, through the school council, to take responsibility, to collaborate and to solve problematic school issues. These opportunities allow pupils to experience and develop their understanding of collective responsibility. Pupil attendance and good behaviour is encouraged, and used as an indicator of enjoyment and achievement. Pupil participation is at the heart of the school’s conception of enjoyment and achievement: participation in the school council, each other’s religious celebrations, class rule making, are among the diverse examples.

## **Internal development and navigating the external world**

### **Ties to beyond the school community**

The school has belonged to the WISP (Wapping, Isles of Dogs, Stepney and Poplar) cluster group since the demise of the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) in the 1980s. In recent years the school has been an active member of its local ‘Action Zone’ (and formerly the ‘Excellence in Cities’ initiative), forming links with other schools on the island. Early on, Year 7, 8, 9 teachers at the secondary school came in to help plan and work alongside the school, to enable a better understanding of the capability of primary children. Through mutual support among the schools, various enterprises have been undertaken, such as the school council looking at environmental issues and the development of peer mentoring. The clusters are well established, and the head has observed that the ethos has been sustained as new headteachers come to understand what they are ‘buying in to’. The funding source of the Action Zone finishes in 2008, and there is some concern among the governors as to future funding.

The extended schools coordinator is also an AST and is the borough PESSCL (physical education, school sport and club links) coordinator, training and ‘growing’ local coaches through the secondary schools. The school is a base for the summer school sports activities, open to all children in the community, which further encourages the maintenance of good facilities.

Recruiting staff locally to admin and support roles and as sports coaches is part of the school’s strategy.

## Business links

The school makes and maintains strong links with the local business community. The head estimated the school has received £140,000 over the past three years through these links. He is able to allocate about five days each half term as well as lunchtimes and after-school meetings because he also has a non-teaching deputy headteacher who runs the school on a day-to-day basis. Apart from funding, these links have a direct impact on learning opportunities. For example, it has enabled the school to offer French, through KPMG, who have also organised and funded an excursion to Paris and Versailles. Similarly, Canary Wharf plc has developed a three-year cricket programme in which the school participates. On a more individual basis, the connections allow the school to locate people who are willing to talk about their work to pupils, and those willing to help with reading. In addition, the school has worked with the local museum and local schools to develop a history unit.

These links have been achieved in part through a courtship between local business and the school. The head refers to 'buying in to' what local businesses want from the school, and they in turn supporting what the school wants. A governor emphasised that the relationship was not instrumental, its nature being more complex. One such partnership is with KPMG, which, as part of its corporate social responsibility, wished to team up with a primary school. Seven Mills' readiness to adopt new ideas underpinned the initial collaboration. Now the KPMG coordinator spoke of how rewarding the 25 members of her staff found the partnership terms of acquiring new skills and being motivated by their work with pupils.

## Conclusions

The headteacher, commenting on the steadily improving Ofsted reports, noted that the school has not changed its underlying philosophy. As time has gone on, government policy has changed and the measures have become more sophisticated so that more of what the school has always been doing has been appreciated by Ofsted.

A key factor in the success of the school is the notion of reciprocity: an attitude whereby each party responds flexibly to the other's needs and wants, while yet working together to further the underlying aim of the school. There is reciprocity between the school and the staff, between the school and businesses, and the school and other schools. Through this reciprocity, the school enables pupils to access the social and financial capital that reinforces the basis of their future economic well-being. The extended activities of the school act to allow this reciprocity to occur. Of concern for the school, however, is the relatively little active involvement of many parents in the school, and a sense that the provision may serve to reinforce the 'hand-out' culture.

Overall, the extended schools initiative, here, has provided a legitimisation of activities that not only further pupils' enjoyment and commitment to their school and education, but also increase the social and financial capital so that aims enshrined in the ECM agenda can be furthered. Pupils and staff have more options available to them to progress learning than in the compulsory National Curriculum and associated strategies, and through such options individual pupils are better able to access what they individually need to underpin their improved attainment.